

9/21/2009 This Week in Congress

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September 21, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress."

"Czars"

"Czars" are Presidential appointees named to serve as policy advisors or agency heads within the administration. The executive branch has named an increasing number of "czars" since the Nixon Administration. Yet the current administration has named an unprecedented number of these positions in its eight months in power. I have drafted legislation that will formally express Congress' opposition to this process while calling on the President to cease all "czar" appointments. The increasing use of unconfirmed government officials and heads of agencies is a symptom of an ever-expanding Federal bureaucracy. The legislation will pressure President Obama to stop the abuse of this flawed appointment process. It is my hope that this legislation will urge a judicial review of this process by the Supreme Court and lead the court to declare this process unconstitutional.

I have also sponsored legislation that will ban an unconfirmed "czar's" salary from being paid by taxpayer dollars. I will be working towards passage of these pieces of legislation to ensure better accountability and transparency within the government.

ACORN

Recently, 11 former Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) employees were arrested for suspicion of voter registration fraud. In the past several weeks, more than five videos have been released to the media that show ACORN employees advising individuals of methods to illegally evade taxes by masking prostitution under an IRS tax code, among other things.

I sponsored legislation to prohibit government funding for ACORN and urged the Chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee to investigate the activities of ACORN. In addition, I supported passage of an amendment Thursday that would prohibit ACORN from receiving further taxpayer money. It is time the government permanently cut off this group's funding. I am pleased that both the House and the Senate passed bills to end portions of ACORN's federal taxpayer funding.

To read my letter to the Chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee, [click here](#). To view my recent statements on ACORN, [click here](#).

Naming the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor

This week, the House passed a resolution I sponsored to recognize the region between Manhattan, Kansas and

Columbia, Missouri as the Kansas City Animal Health Corridor. This region has long been considered our country's headquarters for animal and bio-science. The animal health industries and universities in the corridor provide tremendous advancements in animal science research that benefit agriculture and consumers nationwide. [Click here to view my comments in support of H.Res. 317.](#) [Click here to read my comments in support of this resolution.](#)

Iranian Nuclear Threat Demands Action

Days before an American-set deadline that Iran engage in meaningful talks about its nuclear program, the U.S. and five other nations accepted an Iranian invitation to meet on October 1. Yet, Iran indicates it is unwilling to talk about the most important issue, saying discussion of its nuclear program is "finished."

I spoke to the House of Representatives this week about the Iranian threat and the need for sanctions to persuade Iran to change course. A nuclear-armed Iran would threaten the safety of American troops in the region and key allies like Israel; likely embolden terrorist groups Hamas and Hezbollah; and could lead to a dangerous nuclear arms race in the Middle East. The longer we wait to address Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, the more difficult it becomes to deal with Iran and the world becomes a more dangerous place. [Click here to watch my speech.](#)

Agriculture Hearing about Treasury Proposal to Reform Derivatives Market

On Thursday, I participated in a House Agriculture Committee hearing to review the Obama Administration's proposal to impose new regulations on the over-the-counter (OTC) derivatives market. The Agriculture Committee has jurisdiction over commodity futures markets, including most OTC derivatives. The derivatives proposal is part of the Administration's financial regulatory reform package. This was part one of a two-part hearing, the second of which will occur next Tuesday. Thursday's hearing included ten different witnesses who either use OTC derivatives to hedge commodities or run businesses that facilitate trades in the OTC markets. Next Tuesday's hearing will include the chairman of the Commodity

Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) and the chairwoman of the Securities Exchange Commission (SEC). It is important to hear from these witnesses as the Agriculture Committee attempts to write legislation in this area.

American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers

I spoke to members of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers (ASFMRA) Leadership Institute this week in Washington, D.C. ASFMRA is an organization whose membership collectively manages more than 25 million acres of farm and ranch land for absentee owners, banks and trusts. Each September, the organization holds an annual leadership institute. I was glad to speak to the group about current issues affecting agriculture.

Recent Health Care Editorial

Earlier this week, I read in a Kansas newspaper the suggestion of a simple way to address health care reform - just expand Medicare, the nation's federal insurance program that pays for health care for seniors, to cover more people as the "public option." This idea may appear appealing and certainly seems easier to understand than other proposals currently being pushed in Washington and in the media. However, there are major flaws with this proposal and I do not see how this plan will protect and enhance care for Kansans. [Click here to read my full editorial on this issue.](#)

Celebrating Constitution Day

The U.S. Constitution is one of the most important documents in history. Signed by 39 delegates at the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on September 17, 1787, it created a government where the powers are divided among three branches to ensure sufficient checks and balances. Our nation celebrates the week of September 17th through September 23rd as Constitution Week. Specifically, September 17th is recognized as Constitution Day, as it is the day the Constitutional Convention signed the Constitution. Across the country on September 17th, people marked Constitution Day with various events. "America Reads the Constitution" is a national event sponsored by the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia. Fort Hays State University (FHSU) participated in the event by asking approximately 100 Kansans to read or recite various sections of the Constitution. To help FHSU celebrate this day, I recited Article 1, Sections 1 and 2.

As a Member of Congress, I have taken an oath to support and defend the Constitution. I take that oath seriously and work hard to protect the Constitution from those who seek to disregard its meaning. Especially today, it is important that we remember the Constitution and the rights it protects for all American citizens.

Coronado Area Council Eagle Scout Reception

Sunday, I attended the Coronado Area Council Eagle Scout Reception at the Rolling Hills Refuge Conference Center near Salina. Incorporated on February 8, 1910, and chartered by Congress in 1916, the Boy Scouts of America have provided personal development programs for boys and young adults. Boy Scouts advances values like personal responsibility, service to others and duty to God and country. I am a strong supporter of the Boy Scouts and was glad to participate in the Eagle Scout Reception. I am grateful to be the Honorary Chairman of the council's 100th Anniversary Celebration to help promote the accomplishments and successes of the Coronado Area Council Boys Scouts. [Click here to view a photo.](#)

Naming Hays Army Reserve Center in Honor of First Sergeant Robert L. Kuhn

Saturday, I was the keynote speaker during the ceremony to name the Hays Army Reserve Center in honor of First Sergeant Robert L. Kuhn for his service to his country and community. First Sergeant Kuhn passed away last April after 32 years of distinguished military service. He was drafted to serve in Vietnam in 1969 where he earned a Bronze Star and then remained on active or reserve military status for a total of 32 years before retiring from the Army. For 28 years, First Sergeant Kuhn was a teacher and coach at Hays High School, a member of the USD #489 School Board and served in various other community groups.

Naming the reserve center after First Sergeant Kuhn is an appropriate honor to celebrate the life of a model citizen soldier whose great impact in the Hays community serves as an inspiration for all Army Reservists. The First Sergeant Robert L. Kuhn U.S. Army Reserve Center, as it is now known, is home to the 388th Medical Logistics Battalion. This award-winning unit has proven time and time again their willingness to answer when our country calls. They have been deployed multiple times, providing vital medical care in some of the most dangerous parts of the world. The 388th has a proud history and carries out their mission with the compassion and professionalism I have come to expect from Kansas soldiers.

I joined several of First Sergeant Kuhn's fellow Army Reservists and members of the community in making a request to memorialize the facility in his name. The tribute will forever honor the devotion and duty First Sergeant Kuhn gave to his country and community.

Midwest Research Institute Annual Banquet

On Thursday, I attended the Midwest Research Institute's (MRI) Annual Banquet in Kansas City. MRI is a not-for-profit scientific research organization with employees nationwide that contracts research and laboratory consulting services for clients in government, industry and academia. This year's event, "Embracing Change," included an audience of nearly 500 business, civic, government and academic leaders from throughout the Midwest.

Congratulations to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) President Dr. Susan Hockfield who was presented with MRI's Trustee Citation Award. The award is presented by MRI each year to a person who exemplifies leadership in science, business, academia or the arts. Thank you to James Spigarelli, president and CEO, for his years of dedication to MRI. I wish him luck in his retirement. Congratulations to Michael Helmstetter, incoming president and CEO for MRI.

Thank you to Trevor McKeeman, Business Development Manager for the National Institute for Strategic Technology Acquisition and Commercialization at Kansas State University, for the invitation.

State Spending Time at the Kansas Fair

On Friday, I returned to the State Fair to talk with Kansans and learn more about the issues important to them. My wife Robba, a former president of the State Fair Board, attended the fair events with me. The State Fair wrapped up on Sunday after another successful year of attendance, events and exhibits. Each day during the fair, members of my staff were on hand at my information booth. Kansans from all parts of the state stopped by my booth to discuss current issues.

Kansas Farm Bureau Awards Luncheon: During Farm Bureau Day at the Kansas State Fair on Friday, I attended the Kansas Farm Bureau Awards Luncheon. The Kansas Farm Bureau plays an important role in promoting agriculture education, leadership and appreciation for farmers and ranchers. I joined more than 200 Farm Bureau members who attended the recognition program and luncheon, which honored county Farm Families of the Year, Century Farm Award recipients and Natural Resources Award winners.

It was a pleasure to hear from keynote speaker Marci Penner, director of the Kansas Sampler Foundation. Marci talked about the unique attractions and special people that make up our rural Kansas communities and how we work together to preserve the places we call home. Thank you to Kansas Farm Bureau President Steve Baccus for his invitation. [Click here to view photos from the event.](#)

Fort Riley Soldier of the Year: I enjoyed getting acquainted with Specialist Clancey Henderson, Fort Riley Soldier of the Year. Clancey and his mentor, Staff Sergeant Justin Puls, were at the State Fair volunteering their time at the Geary County Convention and Visitors Bureau booth.

Our men and women in uniform exemplify what is best about America. Congratulations to Clancey on such an impressive honor and to Justin for helping him achieve it. [Click here to view a photo.](#)

"Angels in Adoption": While on the fairgrounds, I had the chance to visit with Brandon Hoffman. I nominated Brandon and his wife Melissa for a 2009 "Angels in Adoption" award, which recognizes extraordinary efforts to improve the lives of children through adoption and foster care. Brandon and Melissa most certainly meet the definition of extraordinary. Since 1998, they have adopted seven special needs children who were in the foster care system. In addition to all they have done directly to help children have a permanent family, in 2007 they began a ministry through their church encouraging others to adopt children from foster care. They are also very involved in Special Olympics and other children's activities in the community.

Brandon and Melissa are strong parents who make caring for children their priority. I look forward to formally honoring the Hoffman's at an awards ceremony in Washington, D.C., on September 30, 2009. [Click here to view a photo.](#)

In the Office

Robert Barker of Hays was in with the Amputee Coalition of America to explain the importance of providing adequate prosthetic care. David Hornick of Leavenworth was in with the Kansas Health Insurance Association give me an update on providing health insurance to Kansas residents. Sarah Tidwell of Emporia was in with the Kansas State Nurses Association to discuss workforce development initiatives for nurses and other health care providers.

Mike Cook of Hutchinson was in with the Association of Educational Service Agencies to talk about education programs. Judy Lair of Piqua was in with the Southeast Kansas Education Service Center to tell me about innovative education initiatives. Lynn Sparkman of Hays, Carson Johnson of Abilene and Joe Hanson of Atchison were in with the Kansas Association of Christian Schools to brief me on the educational concerns of Christian schools. Genny Nicholas and Maurice Watson of Kansas City, Sandra Lawrence of Leawood and Dallas Polen of Overland Park were in with the Children's Mercy Hospitals and Clinics to express their support for beneficial health care reform for children.

Dee Likes, Matt Teagarden and Jody Wacker of Topeka; Todd Allen of Wichita; Mark Smith of Wallace; Tracy Brunner of Ramona; David Cross of Lewis; Matt Perrier of Eureka; and Brian Hemann of Hugoton were in with the Kansas Livestock Association to discuss transportation, marketing agreements, repeal of the estate tax, the impact of environmental regulations and other issues important to Kansas beef producers. Will and Nancy Schulte of Lakin were in to express their support for the repeal of the estate tax. Mary Ann McLaughlin and Diana Fowler of Hays were in to visit.

Olivia Simmons, Becky Blake and Dick Carter, Jr. of Topeka; Sylvia Rice and Brendon Carr of Salina; Susan Henderson of Lawrence; Karen Hibbard of Manhattan; and Donna Price of Goodland were in with the Travel Industry Association to update me on legislation to promote travel and tourism in the United States. Stan Stark of Haviland, Dave Christiansen of Moundridge and Gregory Runyan of Olathe were in with United Benefits Group to tell me about the importance of pensions to co-op workers.

Connie Stewart of Topeka with Northwest Kansas Foster Grandparents and Melody Gault of the Retired Seniors Volunteer Program (RSVP), Augusta were in to visit about the need for increasing opportunities for seniors to contribute to their communities. Larry Fry, President of the Fry-Wagoner Moving Company in Lenexa was in to discuss his industry's view on the highway reauthorization bill as well as the impact the economic downturn has had on his business. Don McNeely, President of the Kansas Automobile Dealers' Association, Dale Wiley of Lawrence, David Shepherd of Fort Scott, John Schmid of Coffeyville, and Larry Carl of Overland Park were in to update me on the serious challenges facing auto dealers in today's difficult retail market and their opposition to General Motors and Chryslers' decisions to let so many dealer franchise contracts expire.

Barry Downing of Wichita was in with the Wichita Coalition for Early Education to advocate for improving early education services for Kansas children. Emil and Jerri Mushrush of Strong City, Donn Teske of Wheaton, Brandon Spevacek of Anthony, Lonnie Hedstrom of Courtland and Rodger Schneider of Salina were in with Kansas Farmers Union to talk about climate change legislation, renewable energy, dairy markets and other issues impacting agriculture. Shailey Innes and Karyn Page of Wichita were in to give me an update on the recent activities at the Kansas World Trade Center.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office for a tour of the United States Capitol, including Richard and Opal Thull of Beloit, Roger and Cheryl Thull of Salina, Judy Mayes of Stafford and Brenda Jellison of Hutchinson.

Contact Me

It is an honor to serve you in Washington, D.C. Please let me know how I can be of assistance. To send me an email, [click here](#). You can also [click here](#) to contact me through one of my Kansas offices or my Washington, D.C., office.

Very truly yours,

Jerry